

## **THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE IRON AGE IN THE PUSHT-I KUH, LURISTAN**

BY

Bruno OVERLAET

(Ghent University & Royal Museums of Art and History, Brussels)

The Belgian Archaeological Mission in Iran or “BAMI” was able to work in Luristan during many years on end. The BAMI was a joint initiative of Ghent University and The Royal Museums of Art and History, Brussels, and worked in close collaboration with the Iranian Archaeological Services. From 1965 until 1979, it was directed by the late Louis Vanden Berghe. During these 14 years, the BAMI managed to undertake extensive surveys and excavations in the Pusht-i Kuh region of Luristan. The finds of the excavations are now kept at the Iran Bastan Museum in Tehran. The field-notes and a limited study selection of the finds were deposited in the Royal Museums of Art and History, Brussels.

Work on the final excavation reports started in 1994 and made it possible to refine the chronology and to outline the various cultural phases of Luristan. The first of the “Luristan Excavation Reports”, published by The Royal Museums of Art and History, provided the information on the Chalcolithic graveyards of Dum Gar Parchinah and Hakalan (Haerinck & Overlaet, 1996). The following volumes have been published in the series *Acta Iranica*, one on the Iron Age III graveyard of Chamahzi Mumah and another on the Iron Age III graveyards in the Aivan plain, Djub-i Gauhar and Gul Khanan Murdah (Haerinck & Overlaet, 1998, 1999). The Late Iron Age or Iron Age III is thus well documented and it is in fact a well defined sub-period in the Pusht-i Kuh. The available information on the “Early Iron Age” or Iron Age I and II (ca. 1300/1250 to 800/750 BC), however, is much more limited. The excavation report and a detailed study of the Early Iron Age graveyards was recently published (Overlaet, 2003). The present paper focuses on the Iron Age chronology and its cultural context.

The following table provides a survey of the Early Iron Age graveyards which were excavated by the BAMI. There are 11 cemeteries with a total

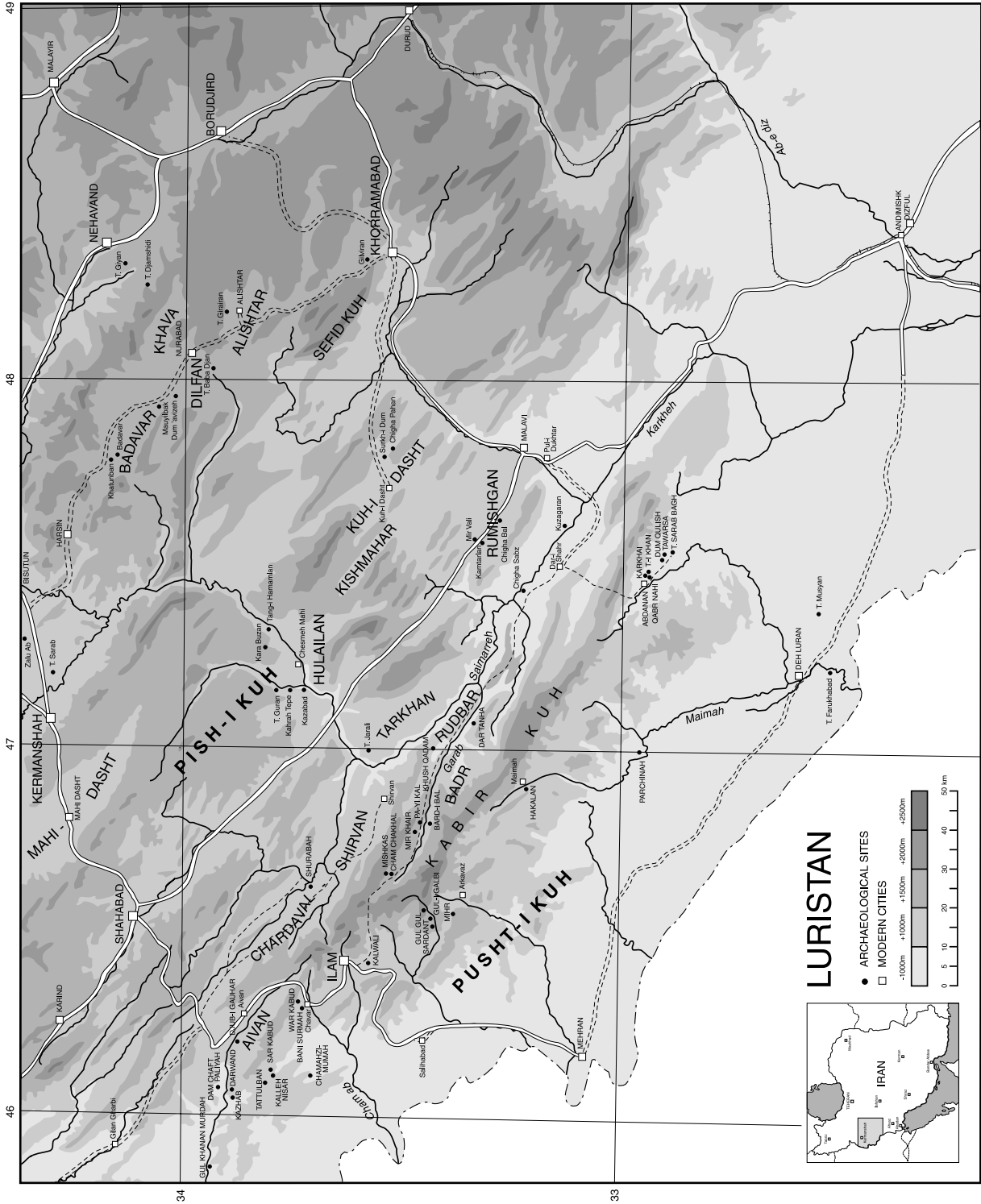


Fig. 1. General map of Luristan.

of 121 tombs (many of which were collective) and over 1550 objects. All these sites are located within the northwestern part of the Pusht-i Kuh, the districts of Aivan, Chavar, Ilam, Arkavaz, Badr and Chardaval. Their geographical position explains the contacts with Mesopotamia which appear from some of the burialgoods. This is altogether a recurrent pattern which was also documented in the Early Bronze Age (Haerinck & Overlaet, 2002, pp. 170-171, fig. 1).

| District          | Graveyard            | Tombs      | Objects    |            |             |
|-------------------|----------------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|
|                   |                      |            | Pottery    | Others     | Total       |
| <i>Aivan:</i>     | Darwand B            | 14         | 26         | 40         | 66          |
|                   | Chal Asat Darik      | 3          | 6          | 6          | 12          |
| <i>Chavar:</i>    | Tulakahnam — Awazeh  | 6          | 13         | 11         | 24          |
|                   | Pusht-i Kabud        | 5          | 16         | 7          | 23          |
| <i>Ilam:</i>      | Tepe Kalwali         | 21         | 61         | 9          | 70          |
|                   | Cham Chakal          | 2          | 5          | 6          | 11          |
| <i>Arkavaz:</i>   | Kutal-i Gulgul       | 18         | 432        | 200        | 632         |
|                   | Duruyeh              | 16         | 73         | 24         | 97          |
| <i>Badr:</i>      | Pa-yi Kal            | 12         | 90         | 42         | 132         |
|                   | Bard-i Bal           | 23         | 225        | 211        | 436         |
| <i>Chardaval:</i> | Shurabah — Payravand | 1          | 37         | 11         | 48          |
| <b>TOTAL:</b>     |                      | <b>121</b> | <b>984</b> | <b>567</b> | <b>1551</b> |

Most of the graveyards which were located by the BAMI were partially plundered and usually merely a few tombs or part of the cemetery were still worth excavating. Only at Bard-i Bal (where also Iron Age III tombs were present) and at Tepe Kalwali, the cemeteries were almost fully investigated. In view of the fragmentary information, estimates of population density are not possible. Well preserved skeletal remains are exceptional in the Pusht-i Kuh. In the case of re-used tombs, it is in most cases also impossible to establish the precise number of people that were interred. The bad preservation of organic remains makes it a necessity to employ specialised personnel during future excavations, not only to study the human remains but in the first place for their retrieval. The Iranian excavations of the Iron Age graveyard at Ilam has demonstrated the possibilities of such a procedure (Soto-Riesle, 1983).

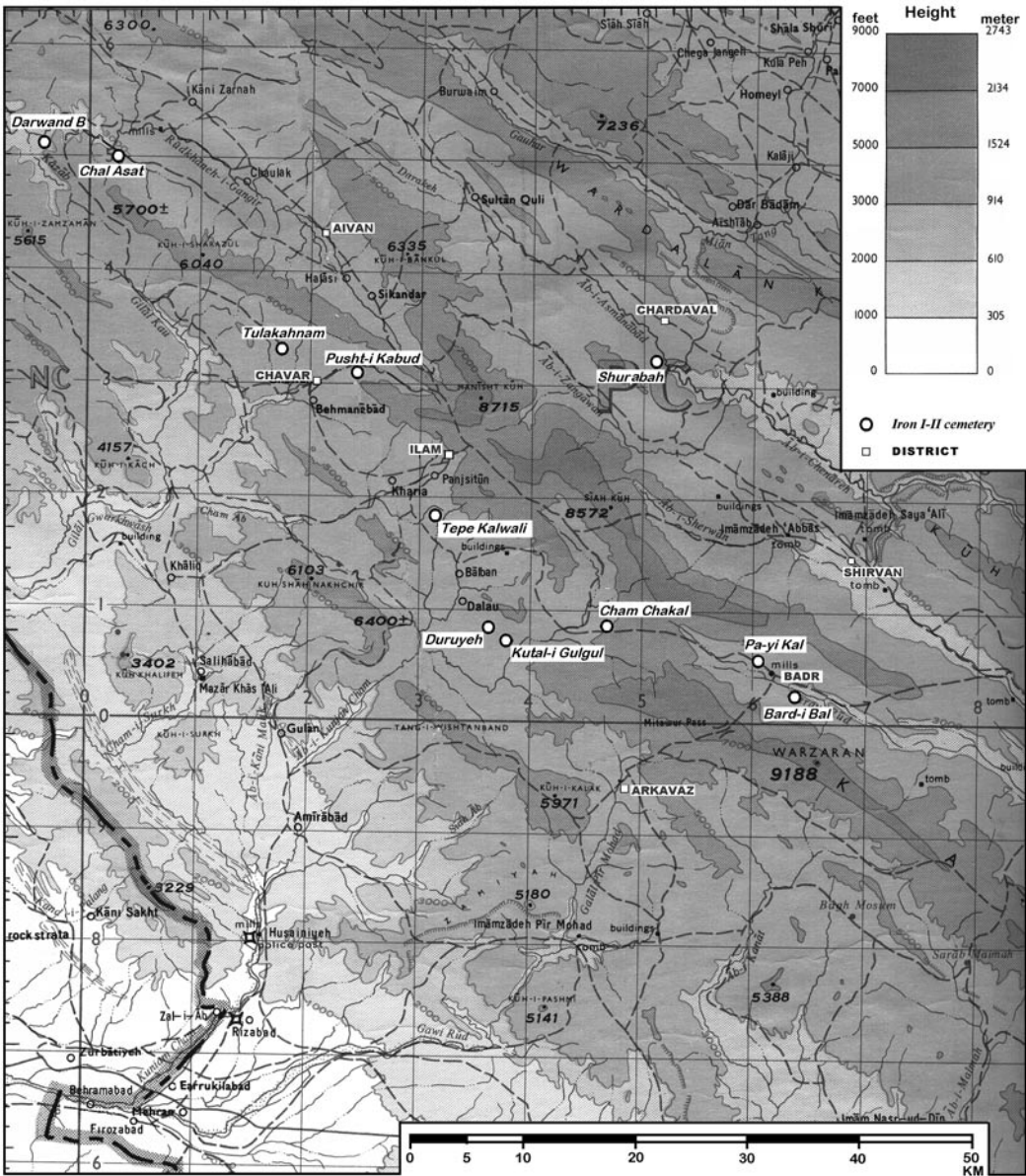


Fig. 2. Northwestern part of the Pusht-i Kuh with the location of the Iron Age I and II graveyards.

The table above demonstrates that two sites, Bard-i Bal (Badr district)

and Kutal-i Gulgul (Arkavaz district), represent together 69% of the finds (both cemeteries had re-used tombs). The districts Arkavaz and Badr represent together even 84% of the finds, distributed over 69 tombs in 4 cemeteries. As a result the BAMI research provides mainly information about the central part of the Pusht-i Kuh. Districts situated more to the northwest, such as Aivan, Chavar and Ilam, provide together only 13% of the finds. In the area south of the line connecting Bard-i Bal with Kutal-i Gulgul, which includes the largest part of the Arkavaz district and the districts of Maimah and Abdanan, no Iron I-II tombs were excavated.

### *The Iron Age Chronology*

The label “Iron Age” is in the Iranian context a somewhat dubious terminology as in the beginning of the “Iron Age”, iron is virtually absent. It refers, however, to a distinctive and sudden change in the material culture which is clearly marked by the pottery. It is self-evident that these changes do not occur simultaneously on a vast and geographically divided territory such as Iran. As a result, a single “Iron Age” terminology can not be used for the whole of Iran. Complicating the situation is the fact that some authors continue to label the “Early Iron Age cultures” Late Bronze Age, which is in view of the “de facto” absence of iron not incorrect (see Kroll, 1984, p. 16; Haerinck, 1988, p. 64; Thrane, 1999, pp. 21-40; 2001, p. 118 note 1). It does not help the transparency of Iranian archaeology, however. But, in the end it is merely a convention, a different name for the same archaeological culture. It does not alter anything to its identification or to its chronology. In view of this situation, it may be useful, however, to provide a brief outline of the origin of the Iron Age terminology in Iranian archaeology.

Young and Dyson proposed the first useful definition of the Iranian Iron Age, dividing it into three consecutive phases. Based on their research in NW-Iran (mainly Hasanlu and Dinkha Tepe), Young distinguished three ceramic strata: the “Early Western Grey Ware Horizon — EWGW”, the “Late Western Grey Ware Horizon — LWGW” and the “Western Buff Ware Horizon — WBW” (Young, 1965, pp. 53-85), which were equated with Dyson’s tripartite division (Dyson, 1965, p. 211) and labelled Iron Age I, II and III (Young, 1967, pp. 11-34). The authors proposed this chronology as a reference for Western Iran but additional research made it



soon clear that Young's three ceramic horizons were only attested in north-western Iran (Young, 1985, p. 362, note 1; Levine, 1987, p. 233). The tripartite Iron Age division continues to be used, however, as a chronological reference in other regions of Iran such as Gilan (Haerinck, 1988, pp. 64-65) and Luristan. However, the revision of the Hasanlu finds have resulted in a redefining of the absolute data of these three ceramic horizons. Their equation with Iron Age I-II-III had to be deserted or their absolute data had to be revised. Young suggested the continued use of the Iron I-II-III as a general chronological indication and to separate these labels from the NW-Iranian ceramic horizons (Young, 1985, p. 362, note 1). His approach of the problem was, however, not generally accepted, which has resulted in the use of different Iron I-II-III divisions for each area of Iran (see Dyson, 1989, p. 6; Muscarella, 1994, pp. 139-140).

The transition from the Late Bronze Age to the Iron Age in NW-Iran, marked by the appearance of the EWGW-horizon, seems to have been a sudden and complete change. The new ceramic horizon was named after the *grey ware*, which represents at Hasanlu 40% of the ceramics (Young, 1965, p. 55). Young associated the EWGW with migrations from NE-Iran. The gradual decline of the Bronze Age settlements in Gurgan may have given rise to a migration along the southern flanks of the Elburz. EWGW makes its first appearances at sites such as Gheytyeh (Kambakhsh Fard, 1969; 1970; Curtis 1989), Khurvin (Vanden Berghe, 1964) and Siyalk V (Ghirshman, 1939). Although there is an obvious and sudden breach with the Bronze Age traditions, Young is of the opinion that this migration could have been a slow process without the military acquisition of territory (Young, 1985, p. 373). The core area of the EWGW consists of the region south of the Elburz and of northwestern Iran. In Western Iran it seems to be present somewhat later and only in limited numbers at Godin Tepe, at Tepe Giyan, and possibly also in the Mahi Dasht and Kangavar valleys, where the lack of diagnostic vessel shapes, however, does not allow it to be distinguished with certainty from LWGW. At present, permanent EWGW settlements are only attested in NW-Iran (Young, 1985, pp. 366-368).

Although different approaches and interpretations of the archaeological records have been suggested, the core of Young's hypothesis continues to stand. Attempts by Medvedskaya to disprove the breach in the material culture between the Late Bronze Age and the Iron Age and even to deny

the introduction of extra muros cemeteries in the Iron Age, are unconvincing (Medvedskaya, 1982; see however Young, 1985, p. 368, note 6, p. 373, note 11 and Muscarella, 1994, pp. 139-155, fig. 12, pl. 12, *passim*).

Diagnostic EWGW pottery shapes are bridgeless spouted teapots with base-pouch, button base beakers with vertical handle and worm bowls. These shapes occur together in NW-Iran at sites such as Geoy Tepe, Haftavan, Hajji Firuz Tepe, Kordlar Tepe, Hasanlu and Dinkha Tepe (Muscarella, 1994, p. 142, fig. 12.4-5, pl. 12.1.2, 12.2.2, 12.3). The LWGW displays less uniformity. A greater diversity from one site to the other points to the importance of local developments. Among the most characteristic pottery shapes are bridged teapots with base-pouch and teapots with tubular spouts and basket handles. The continuity between the LWGW and the WBW horizon in NW-Iran remains problematic. The WBW may have been introduced from central western Iran. Young points to the chronological correlation with the first references to the presence of Iranians (Medes and Persians) in this region as a possible explanation (Young, 1985, pp. 375-376), but more research is needed on this hypothesis.

The Iron Age division proposed by Young and Dyson was also adopted by Louis Vanden Berghe as a referential chronological framework for the Pusht-i Kuh and more generally for Luristan. Linking the archaeological material to the NW-Iranian ceramic horizons was, however, not possible. Grey ware is absent during the Iron Age I-II phases in the Pusht-i Kuh and the diagnostic NW-Iranian pottery shapes do not occur. In the Iron Age III phase, characterised by the WBW horizon in NW-Iran, a diagnostic fine grey ware is adopted in the Pusht-i Kuh. Since the archaeological material from the Pusht-i Kuh could not be linked neither to the Mesopotamian, nor to the NW-Iranian absolute chronology, Vanden Berghe suggested the existence of important overlaps between the phases and proposed the following absolute dates (Vanden Berghe, 1973, pp. 4-5): Iron I, 1300/1250-1000/900; Iron II, 1000/900-800/750; Iron III, 800/750-600 BC.

Whereas the Iron Age III phase can archaeologically clearly be distinguished from the earlier phases, a division between an Iron Age I and II does not meet the available data from the Pusht-i Kuh. However, since this terminology is widely used, it may be preferable to divide the Iron Age I and the Iron Age II each in an A and B sub-phase rather than introduce at this stage yet another labelling system. When more information becomes

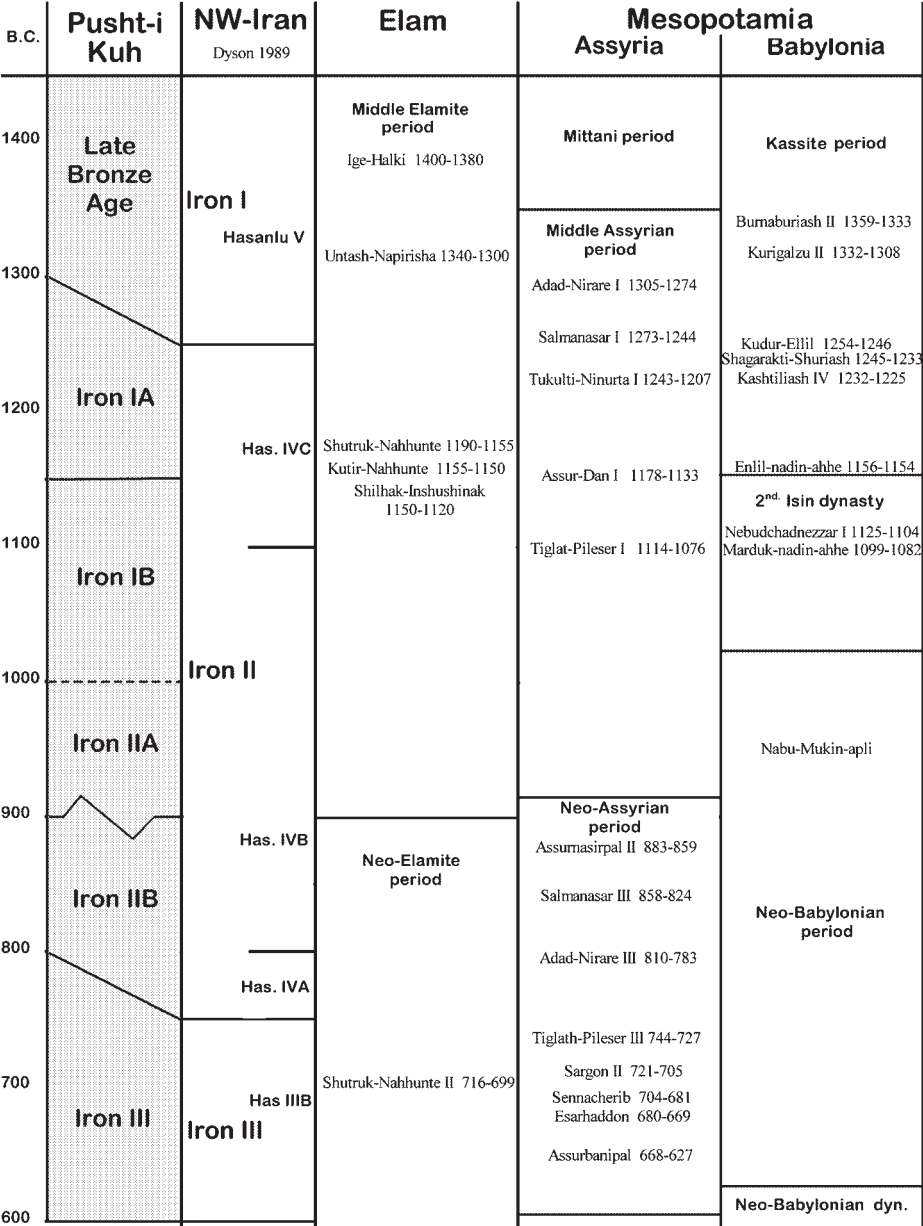


Fig. 3. The Pusht-i Kuh chronology.



available, a better-suited terminology may have to be introduced. In the following survey, we will discuss the main topics of the Iron Age in the Pusht-i Kuh in 4 chronological phases: the Iron Age IA, the Iron Age IB-IIA, the Iron Age IIB and the Iron Age III.

*The Iron Age IA. (ca. 1300/1250 — ca. 1150 BC)*

Little is known about the Late Bronze Age in the Pusht-i Kuh and the transition to the Iron Age. The circumstances of the changes that occurred remain elusive. Only one Late Bronze Age tomb was excavated in the Pusht-i Kuh. It is located at Sarab Bagh (Abdanan district) (Vanden Berghe et alii, 1982, pp. 54-55, fig. 20), which lies much more to the Southeast, however, than the Early Iron Age cemeteries which are now discussed. The painted wares from this tomb belong to the Late Bronze Age tradition. It suggests that the Late Bronze Age in the Pusht-i Kuh may not have differed significantly from that in the Pish-i Kuh where a local Giyan III-II related culture was present. Important settlement sites in the Pish-i Kuh, such as Tepe Baba Djan, Tepe Djamshidi and Girairan, seem to have been deserted at the end of the Bronze Age (Goff, 1968, p. 127; 1971, pp. 150-151 / Schmidt, van Loon, Curvers, 1989, pp. 486-487). At Tepe Guran in the Hulailan plain, settlement did continue but possibly on a much smaller scale (see Thrane, 2001). The context of this desertion remains elusive. Climatological and/or ecological misfortunes may have played an important role, since there are no reports of military destruction from any of the Bronze Age sites. The desertion of the settlements also coincides with a period of increased rainfall in the Near East, which reached a peak between 1350 and 1250 BC (Neumann & Parpola, 1987, p. 164). It cannot be excluded that increased rainfall, possibly resulting in major and/or repetitive flooding, placed such pressure on the agriculturally oriented population that the local economic system eventually collapsed. Geomorphological research in Luristan is needed to decide whether such a hypothesis is tenable. However, the reality of such a scenario is proven by similar events that took place in the nearby Marv Dasht valley in the 12th.-13th. centuries AD (Brookes, 1989, pp. 34-35). A more recent example of massive desertion of Iranian villages following consecutive crop failures took place in Khurasan between 1870 and 1872 AD (Melville, 1984, pp. 130-131). In the context of the change-over from the Late Bronze Age to the Iron Age, it is of particular interest that a similar phenomenon seems

to have occurred in the Kangavar valley. Whereas the main Bronze Age settlements were located in the plain itself, it seems they significantly reduced in size or were deserted in the Early Iron Age. An increase of sites in the hills on the other hand may suggest, according to Young, a change to a subsistence economy based heavily on herding (Young, 2002, pp. 424-426).

Based on the comparison of pottery shapes with Mesopotamian and Elamite examples, the start of the Iron Age in the Pusht-i Kuh is situated in the beginning of the 13th century BC. The earliest stage is best illustrated by finds from the graveyard at Duruyeh (pl. 1). It is an “extra-muros” cemetery with individual tombs. Among the characteristic burial-goods are toggle pins, pitchers with a pinched spout and carinated beakers. The toggle pins and the pitchers are the continuation of a Bronze Age tradition, be it that the pitchers are no longer painted but are now made of buff ware. The continued occurrence of Bronze Age pottery shapes and of certain specific objects suggests that we are not confronted with a radical break as one could expect with the arrival of a totally new population. It is an argument in favour of the idea that certain changes in the living circumstances (caused by climatological/ecological changes) may have brought on the necessity to adapt to a new lifestyle. An alternative suggestion is that some (ethnic?) minorities in the region may have had a way of life, which was more suited to this new situation. One may think of minor population groups, possibly semi-sedentary or nomadic, that were present in the region but that have not been identified archaeologically. Such groups could in fact expand after the collapse of an agriculturally oriented sedentary society, which until then would have occupied most of the good land.

The presence among the Early Iron Age burial goods of “Iron IA carinated beakers” (pl. 1: t.5 n° 2; pl. 3:3), related to Late Kassite pottery from Mesopotamia, points to the existence of links with Mesopotamia. These beakers first appear in Luristan in Late Bronze Age burials at Tepe Sarab Bagh (Vanden Berghe et alii, 1982, p. 55, fig. 20) and at Tepe Guran (Thrane, 2001, pp. 49-58, fig. 39-44) and are among the diagnostic objects in the Iron Age IA tombs. At Duruyeh it was noticed that pitchers were rapidly replaced by teapots as a common burialgood. Teapots will remain the diagnostic pottery shape throughout the remainder of the Iron

Age (see pl. 3, 8-9, 11). The Iron IA tombs at Kutal-i Gulgul seem to be slightly later than those at Duruyeh but still belong to the Iron Age IA. They were no longer conceived as individual tombs but were made slightly larger and were destined to receive a number of consecutive burials (pl. 2-3). Some were even re-used until the Iron Age III. Apart from the Iron IA carinated beakers, other objects such as faience vessels (pl. 3 n° 4-5; pl. 4 n° 14) and particularly a group of decorated shell finger rings of Kassite manufacture (pl. 4:12-13), indicate continued contacts with Mesopotamia. The small green glazed faience bucket from Kutal-i Gulgul (pl. 4:14) is considered to be a Babylonian export product and is a type artefact for the Late Kassite era (ca. 1350-1150 BC) (Clayden, 1998). They are thought to have fulfilled a specific ritual role in burials and similar ones are reported from the nearby Hamrin area. The geometrically decorated Kassite rings were once colourfully inlaid and can in their Mesopotamian context be dated to the last quarter of the 13th. century and the first half of the 12th. century BC (Boehmer, 1982, p. 40; Boehmer & Dämmer, 1985, p. 80).

The end of the Iron Age IA phase in the Pusht-i Kuh, which is characterised by the presence of these import objects from Kassite Mesopotamia, can be situated around 1150 BC. The military campaign of the Elamite army of Shutruk-Nahhunte around 1160 BC, which resulted in the destruction of the Kassite townships in the Diyala, may have cut off the Pusht-i Kuh from its suppliers. As a result, the deposition of Kassite objects in tombs may have ended not long afterwards, possibly somewhere around 1150 BC.

Although the occurrence of iron, particularly for jewellery, in the Iron IA phase is a possibility, it is certainly not diagnostic. Anklets, bracelets and finger rings are still made of bronze. Diagnostic throughout the Iron Age I-II phase in the Pusht-i Kuh is the occurrence of bronze anklets with incised geometric decorations (pl. 4:4). Also diagnostic for both the Iron I and II phases are bronze arrowheads with incised herringbone patterns. Bronze flange-hilted daggers are common among the Iron I to IIA and one specific sub-type seems to be characteristic for the Pusht-i Kuh (pl. 3:8).

The first elements of the typical Luristan decorative style are now attested to be as early as the Iron Age IA phase. The association with Kassite shell rings made it possible to date a fragmentary spiked axehead and “swimming duck” headed pins (pl. 4:1-3). Other canonical bronzes such

as spiked axes with animal decorations, whetstone handles with naturalistic animal decorations, bracelets with terminals in the shape of “swimming duck”, and idols in the shape of naturalistically rendered rampant animals *may* also belong to the Iron Age IA but could also be slightly later, from the Iron Age IB phase (see pl. 6 bottom).

*The Iron Age IB / IIA. (ca. 1150 — ca. 900 BC)*

The following phase in the Pusht-i Kuh would include the transition from the later part of the Iron Age I to the early part of the Iron Age II in the traditional view. Since a distinction between an Iron Age IB and IIA can at present not be made, it is discussed as one phase, the Iron Age IB/IIA. This phase is still badly known in the Pusht-i Kuh. Many Iron Age IA tombs at sites such as Kutal-i Gulgul and Bard-i Bal, remained in use during the Iron Age IB/IIA, and some even during the IIB and III phases. The absence of IB/IIA diagnostic objects makes it difficult to identify the interments that belong to this specific phase. Often, it is merely the absence of diagnostic Iron IA material and an increased occurrence of iron which are indicative for the Iron IB/IIA interments. It is at present impossible to suggest a detailed chronology for this phase because there are no imports, which would allow a link with the Mesopotamian chronology. There was, however, obviously an evolution in pottery types since in the latter half of the Iron Age II, our Iron Age IIB, a distinct, coherent and diagnostic pottery assemblage can again be recognised.

Not only Iron Age IA tombs were re-used, however, also new tombs were being constructed. Some of these, like tomb 17 at Bard-i Bal (pl. 5), display innovative features. This Bard-i Bal tomb is larger and deeper than any of the Iron Age IA tombs and has a small stepped entrance. At least 6 individuals were buried in it, 3 men, 1 woman and 2 children.

During the Iron Age IB-IIA, the Luristan decorative style further developed (pl. 6). Tombs with decorated spiked axes, whetstone handles in the shape of naturalistically rendered animals, bracelets with terminals in the shape of “swimming duck”, and idols in the shape of naturalistically rampant animals must probably be dated to this phase, although as said before, it should not be excluded that some shapes already occurred in the Iron Age IA.

Climatic aspects may again be an important element in explaining the apparently small number of tombs that can be dated to this IB/IIA phase. Following the period of increased rainfall which may be connected with

the end of the Bronze Age in the region, a much dryer period occurred between ca. 1250 and 950 BC (Neumann & Parpola, 1987, pp. 164-165). This would have reached its peak around 1150 BC. The weakening of both Assyria and Babylonia is thought to have been largely the result of this changing precipitation which would have caused a chain of events, including crop failures, famines and epidemics, in turn giving rise to military conflicts and migrations (Neumann & Parpola, 1987, pp. 161-162). In some areas, this would have caused a drastic fall in population density. Brinkmann suggests that in some areas, such as the north-eastern part of Mesopotamia (the Diyala area), a population drop of up to 75 % occurred (Brinkmann, 1984, p. 173). Although the diminished rainfall may have touched less the higher situated mountainous regions such as Luristan, a decreased population would be one explanation for the small number of known tombs. On the other hand, in view of the limited number of Iron Age I-II tombs that have altogether been discovered, this may simply not be representative. Another element, which may distort our perception of the situation, is the occurrence of multiple interments in the tombs. Since little skeletal remains were preserved and since they were not studied in detail, it is often impossible to know exactly how many people were interred in these tombs. Providing population estimates is thus simply impossible. More research is needed to clarify these aspects.

*The Iron Age IIB. (ca. 900 — ca. 800/750 BC)*

In the Iron Age IIB diagnostic pottery shapes can again be distinguished. Tepe Kalwali is the most important site that belongs to this period (pl. 7-8). Pusht-i Kabud (pl. 9) and Darwand B are other IIB graveyards but are already to be dated on the transition to the Iron Age III. At Tepe Kalwali, small individual tombs were discovered which were built with stone slabs. They contained only a small number of relatively poor burialgoods. Metal objects were limited to some iron daggers, bracelets and rings. In view of this, Tepe Kalwali is not likely to provide a complete and representative picture of the Iron Age IIB in the Pusht-i Kuh.

During the IIB phase, there is a return to individual tombs, a concept, which will continue in the Iron Age III. Teapots with basket handles and/or double grooved vertical handles, and plates or bowls with one small vertical handle or knob on the rim are the diagnostic shapes. The use of iron is no longer limited to jewellery. Daggers are now also produced in iron and in one case from Tepe Kalwali, its shape imitates that of the older

bronze daggers (pl. 7). Not all of the weaponry is made of iron, however. Arrowheads continue to be made of bronze and will only be made of iron from the Iron Age III onwards. There were no axes excavated in any of the IIB tombs and it remains uncertain whether bronze spiked axes were still used or whether another, simpler type of (iron) axe, which is known from Iron Age III cemeteries, had already been introduced (see pl. 13:9). A unique find at Bard-i Bal has demonstrated that the idols have evolved from the naturalistically rendered rampant animals into a much more complicated iconography (Overlaet, 2003, p. 187, fig. 153-154, pl. 184). Other canonical bronzes were, however, not found.

What incited the Luristan population to abandon their traditional re-use of (family?) tombs and to build individual tombs again, remains a mystery. Did it go together with yet another change in lifestyle? We do know that from about 950/900 BC a new cooler period with renewed increase of precipitation is thought to have started (Neumann & Parpola, 1987, p. 175) and it may be more than a coincidence that in the course of the 9th. century a number of the larger tepe's in the Pish-i Kuh, deserted at the end of the Bronze Age, were resettled. A sedentary lifestyle seems to have been possible again. These settlers of the Pish-i Kuh are characterised by the painted "Baba Djan III" ware. Their appearance in the Pish-i Kuh seems to announce the end for the cultural context of the canonical Luristan bronzes (see Haerinck, Jaffar-Mohammadi & Overlaet, 2004, pp. 134-135).

### *The Iron Age III. (ca. 800/750 — ca. 650 BC)*

The small number of Iron Age IIB tombs contrasts with the many hundreds of the Iron Age III which are known from the Pusht-i Kuh. Our knowledge of the material culture is thus much more representative. As a rule, the Iron Age III tombs are individual, although occasionally tombs are used for an adult and one or more children, and even for 2, exceptionally for 3 or 4 adults (Djub-i Gauhar, see Haerinck & Overlaet, 1999, pp. 7-10). Some of the older Iron Age I-II tombs were also re-used but this seems to be an occasional feature. At Shurabah, for example, an Iron III interment took place in an Iron IA tomb (Overlaet, 2003, pp. 633-634, pl. 211). An Iron IA tomb at Bard-i Bal may have been partly emptied before an Iron III woman was interred since only a few beads and some bronze and pottery fragments of the IA phase remained (Bard-i Bal tomb 62, see Overlaet, 2003, p. 558, pl. 195-198). The Iron Age III tombs display a



variety of shapes and sizes (pl. 10). There are simple pit graves some of which were closed with stone slabs, cist burials of various shapes and sizes, and an occasional jar burial (Vanden Berghe, 1987, pp. 211-217; Haerinck & Overlaet, 1998, pp. 3-6, ill. 1; 1999, pp. 7-10, 153-156, ill. 3, 28; 2004, pp. 7-18, fig. 4-5). An exceptional feature occurred at Chamahzi Mumah. The tombs were constructed at a depth of 1 to 2 meters and were indicated at the surface by a circle of stones (pl. 10).

New wares and pottery shapes occur among the Iron Age III burialgoods (pl. 11-12). Diagnostic are fine buff and particularly fine grey ware. Certain new shapes seem to have been adopted from the Pish-i Kuh, since not only the shapes but also the incised decorative patterns on them seem to imitate painted patterns of the Baba Djan III ware. Still, important differences continue to occur between both regions. Teapots with bridged channel spout and base-pouch, which are characteristic among the Baba Djan III ware, are almost absent in the Pusht-i Kuh. Only two specimens were discovered at War Kabud (pl. 11:1; Haerinck & Overlaet, 2004, p. 33, fig. 10:16, pl. 64, 99, tombs B175 and B176). In the Pusht-i Kuh, jugs with one handle and teapots with tubular spouts and basket handles are among the diagnostic shapes. Animal shaped vessels occurred in tombs at Djub-i Gauhar and War Kabud (pl. 12:5) (Haerinck & Overlaet, 1999, p. 15, ill. 7, pl. B-E, 68-73; 2004, p. 34-35, fig. 11:19, pl. 65, 111-113).

From the metal finds (pl. 13-14), it is obvious that iron is in the Iron Age III no longer a material, which is identified with value or prestige. Iron jewellery, which was common in the Iron Age IB to IIB, has again become the exception and bronze, silver or gold is used instead. Silver and gold remains rare, however. It is only used in very small quantities, for earrings or nose rings (pl. 14:9-10) and occasionally for beads (Haerinck & Overlaet, 2004, p. 68-71, fig. 27-31, 36, pl. 149). Iron is generally used for weapons as well as for utensils. Not only swords, spearheads, daggers and axes are made of iron, but also less "permanent" items such as arrowheads. The rare bronze arrowheads which are occasionally encountered in Iron Age III tombs can be regarded as heirlooms. Bronze is still used for some weapons which have more complex shapes, for example maceheads (pl. 13:11-13). Bronze vessels, which were very rare during the Iron Age I-II, are in fact very common among the Iron III burialgoods. The burialgoods thus reflect a general increase in wealth in comparison to the Iron Age I-II.

Canonical Luristan bronzes are rare among the Iron Age III finds, which seems to indicate that at least the highpoint has passed. Another

explanation could be that the cultural centre is located in the Pish-i Kuh, as the Pusht-i Kuh is after all the border area of Luristan. Only a few finials and/or supports were discovered in Iron Age III tombs (Overlaet, 2003, pp. 188-189, fig. 155-156). One complete “master of animals” finial with its bronze support (pl. 14:11) was found at the Tattulban graveyard, which must be dated to the beginning of the Iron Age III. A bronze support and a tube on the other hand were discovered at Gul Khanan Murdah. Another support which was used upside down as the support for an iron statuette, probably the indication that it was somehow re-used, comes from a tomb at Chamahzi Mumah. Simple iron shaft-hole axes occurred at several sites and replaced the bronze spike-butt axes of the Iron Age I-II (pl. 13:9). In three of the cemeteries, there still occurred a bronze axe-adze, two of which were decorated with bearded human faces (pl. 13:10). They are, however, simple naturalistic human faces that have little left in common with the complicated iconography of the canonical Luristan imagery.

The large number of Iron Age III tombs in the Pusht-i Kuh and the resettlement of the habitation sites in the Pish-i Kuh, suggests a noticeable increase in population size. The burialgoods also reflect renewed contacts with the surrounding cultures, such as the Elamites to the south-west and the Assyrians in Mesopotamia. This last element is also illustrated by the mention of military conflicts in the Assyrian annals and by the BAMI discovery of the Neo-Assyrian rock-sculpture at Shikaft-i Gulgul (Reade, 1977).

### *Conclusion*

The BAMI field research has provided the possibility to propose a refined chronology for the Iron Age in the Pusht-i Kuh, based exclusively on excavated material. From this short survey it will be clear, however, that many aspects still remain to be explained. We have, for example, virtually no information on the final phase of the Late Bronze Age and its transition to the Iron Age. The research has been exclusively targeted on graveyards and settlement sites remain to be studied. Some tepe's are known to exist in the plains of Aivan, Shirvan and Chardaval but none has been excavated or studied and it is simply not known whether they were occupied during the Iron Age.

More and also interdisciplinary field research in both the Pusht-i Kuh and the Pish-i Kuh is needed to complement the present data and to verify

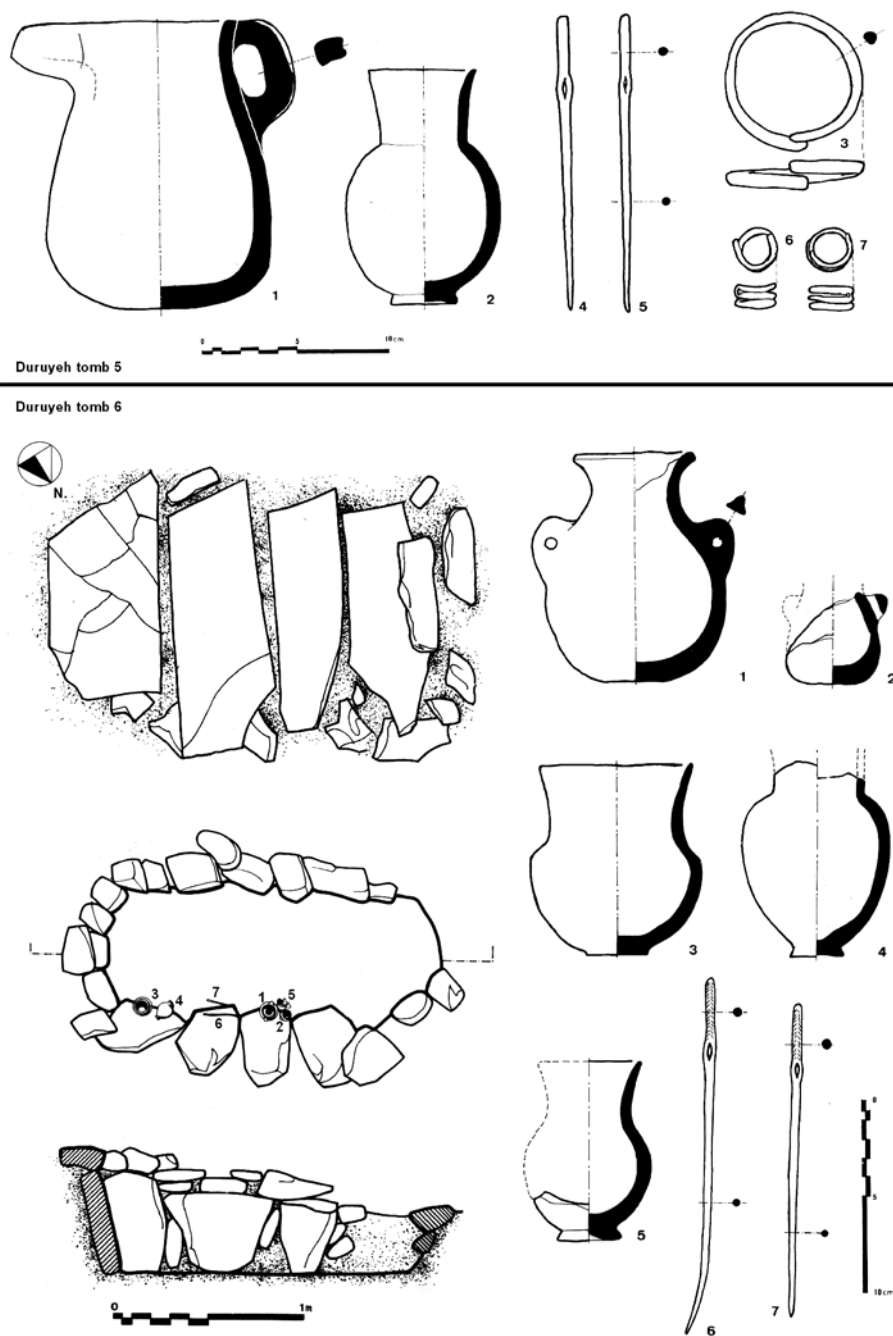
some of the ideas about life style, settlement patterns, population density and climatological events that have been launched.

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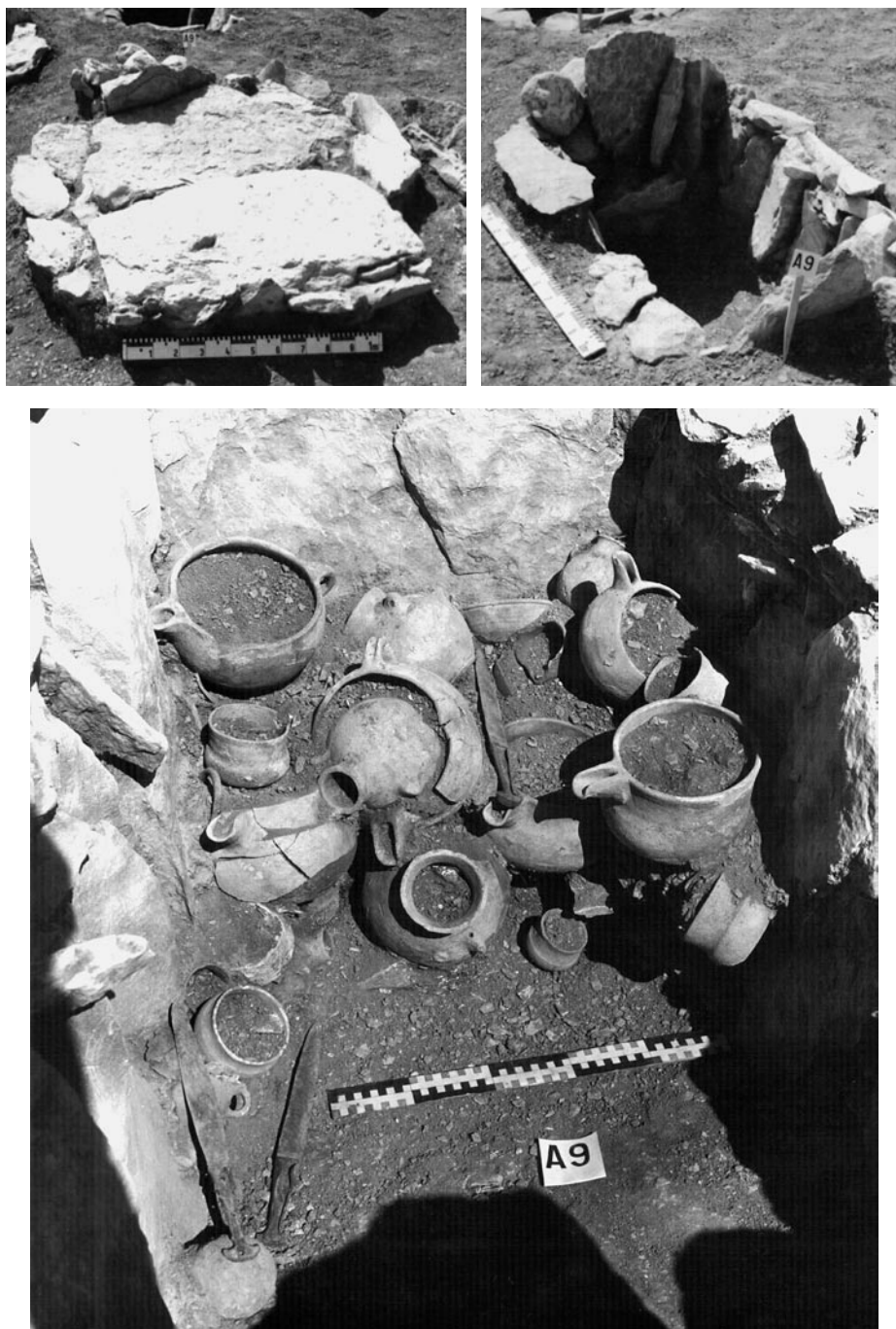
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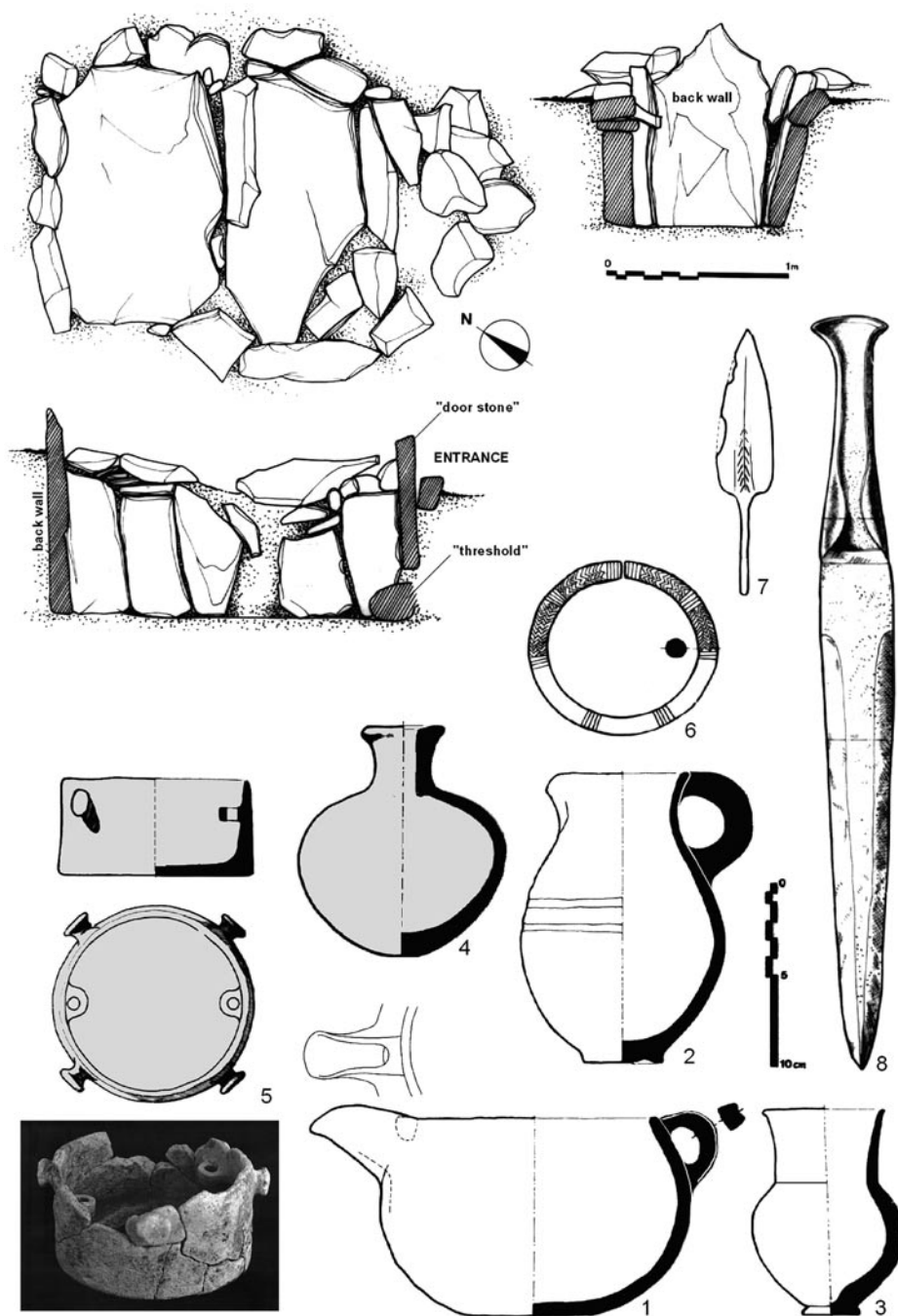


Pl. 1. Iron Age IA. Duruyeh: burialgoods of tomb 5, tomb and burialgoods of tomb 6.

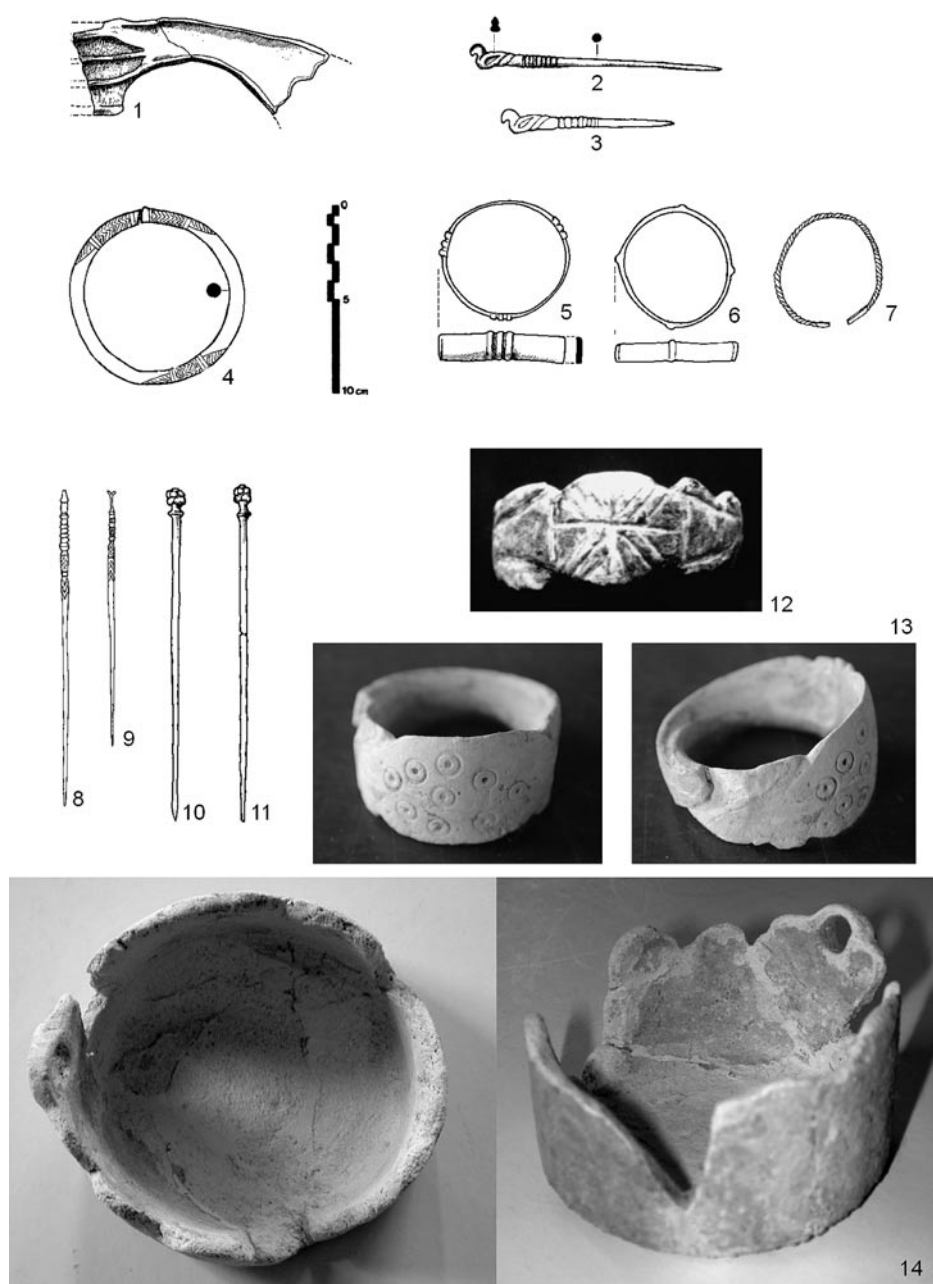




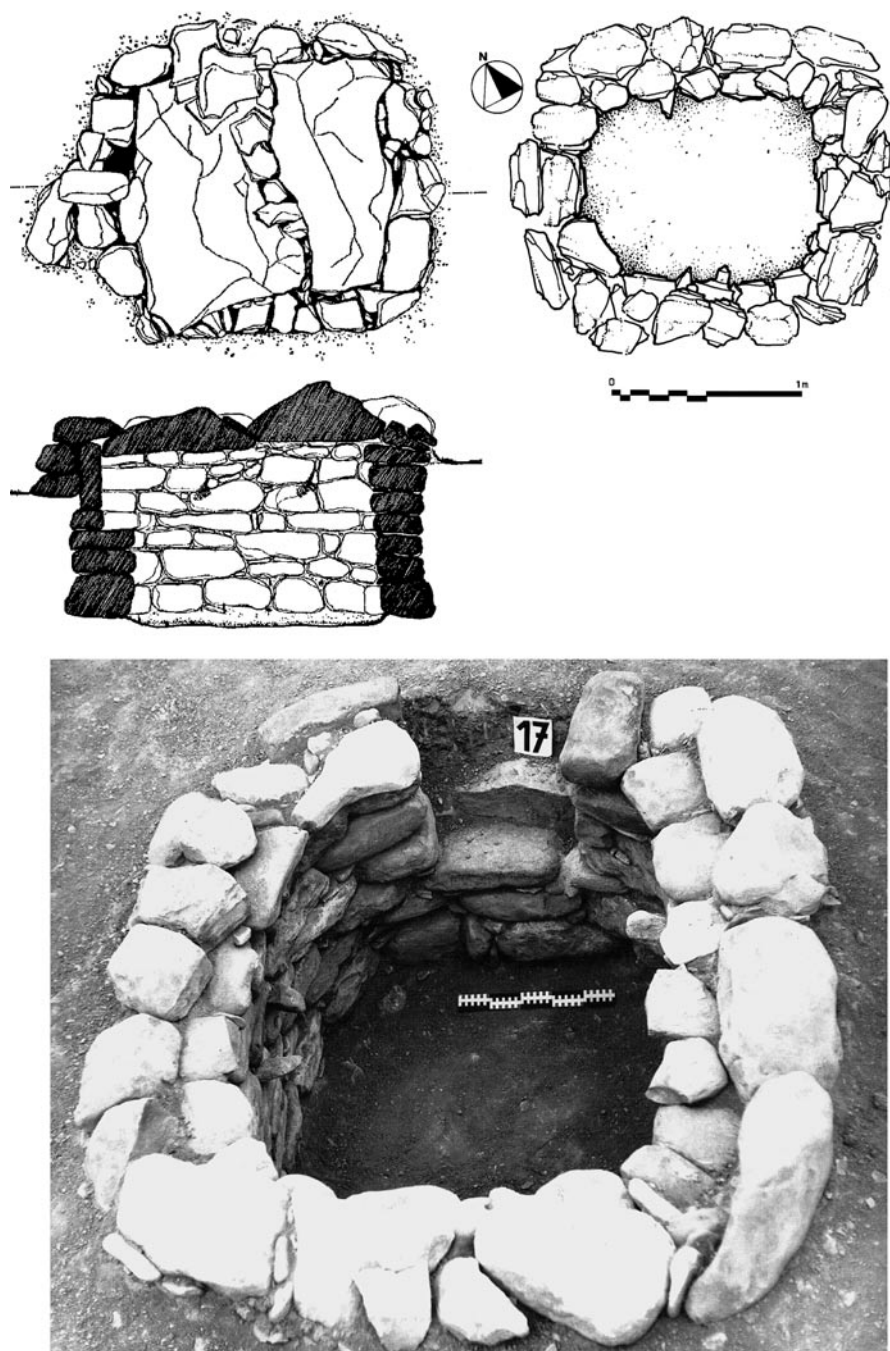
Pl. 2. Iron Age IA. Kotal-i Gulgul: tomb A9 and view of the burialgoods in situ.



Pl. 3. Iron Age IA. Kutal-i Gulgul: tomb construction and selection of burialgoods from tomb A9 (1-3. pottery / 4-5. faience / 6. bronze anklet / 7. bronze arrowhead / 8. bronze dagger).

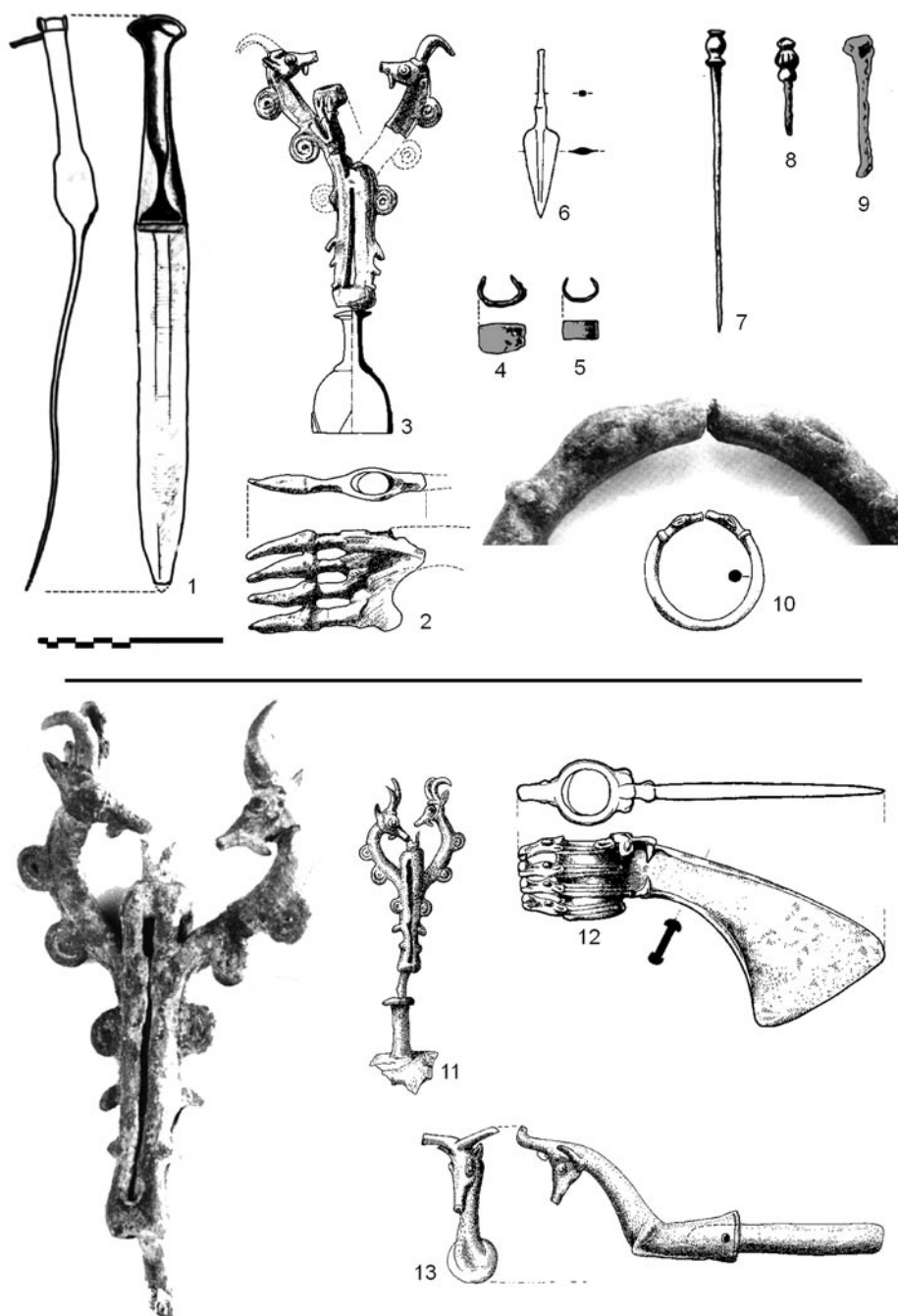


Pl. 4. Iron Age IA burialgoods: 1. fragment of a spike butted axe head (Bard-i Bal) / 2-3. pins with "swimming duck" heads (Kutal-i Gulgul) / 4. bronze anklet (Kutal-i Gulgul) / 5-7. bronze bracelets (Bard-i Bal) / 8-11. bronze pins (Bard-i Bal and Shurabah) / 12-13. shell finger rings (Shurabah and Bard-i Bal) / 14. faience bucket (Kutal-i Gulgul).

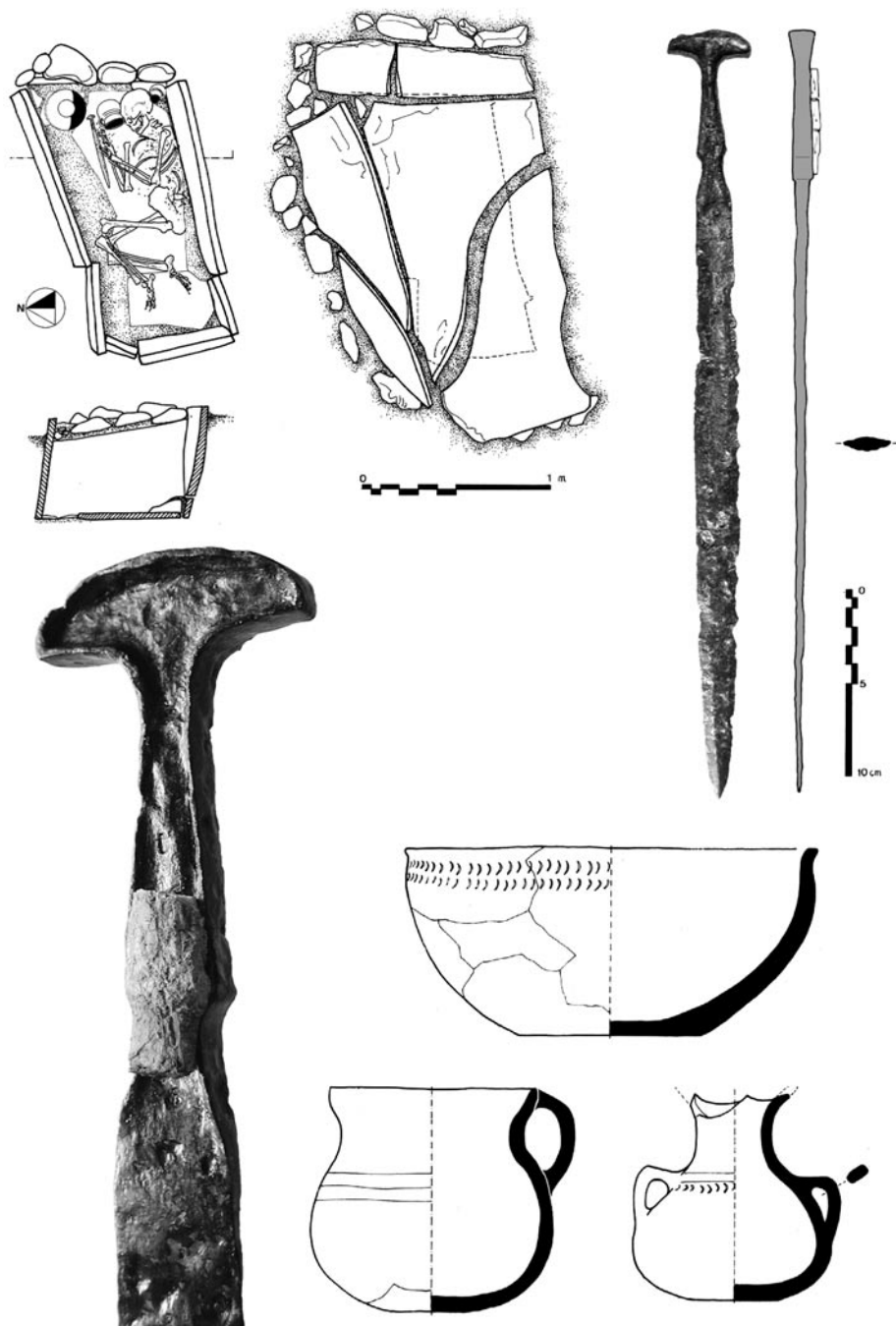


Pl. 5. Iron Age IB-IIA. Collective tomb 17 at Bard-i Bal.



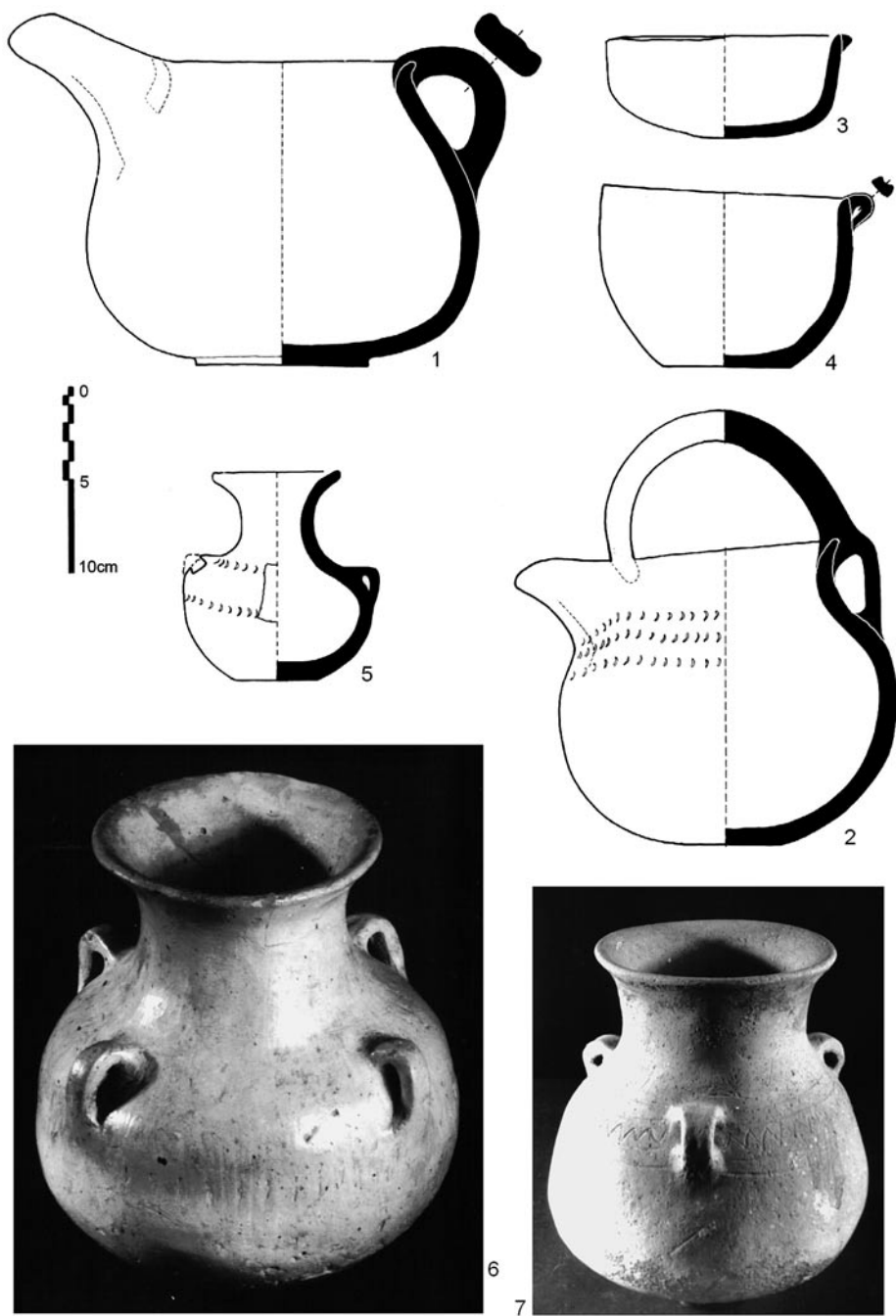


Pl. 6. Iron Age IB-IIA. Top: selection of burialgoods from tomb 17 at Bard-i Bal (see pl. 5). Bottom: canonical Luristan bronzes (11 & 13, Bard-i Bal / 12, Kutal-i Gulgul) from the Iron Age IB-IIA or possibly slightly earlier.

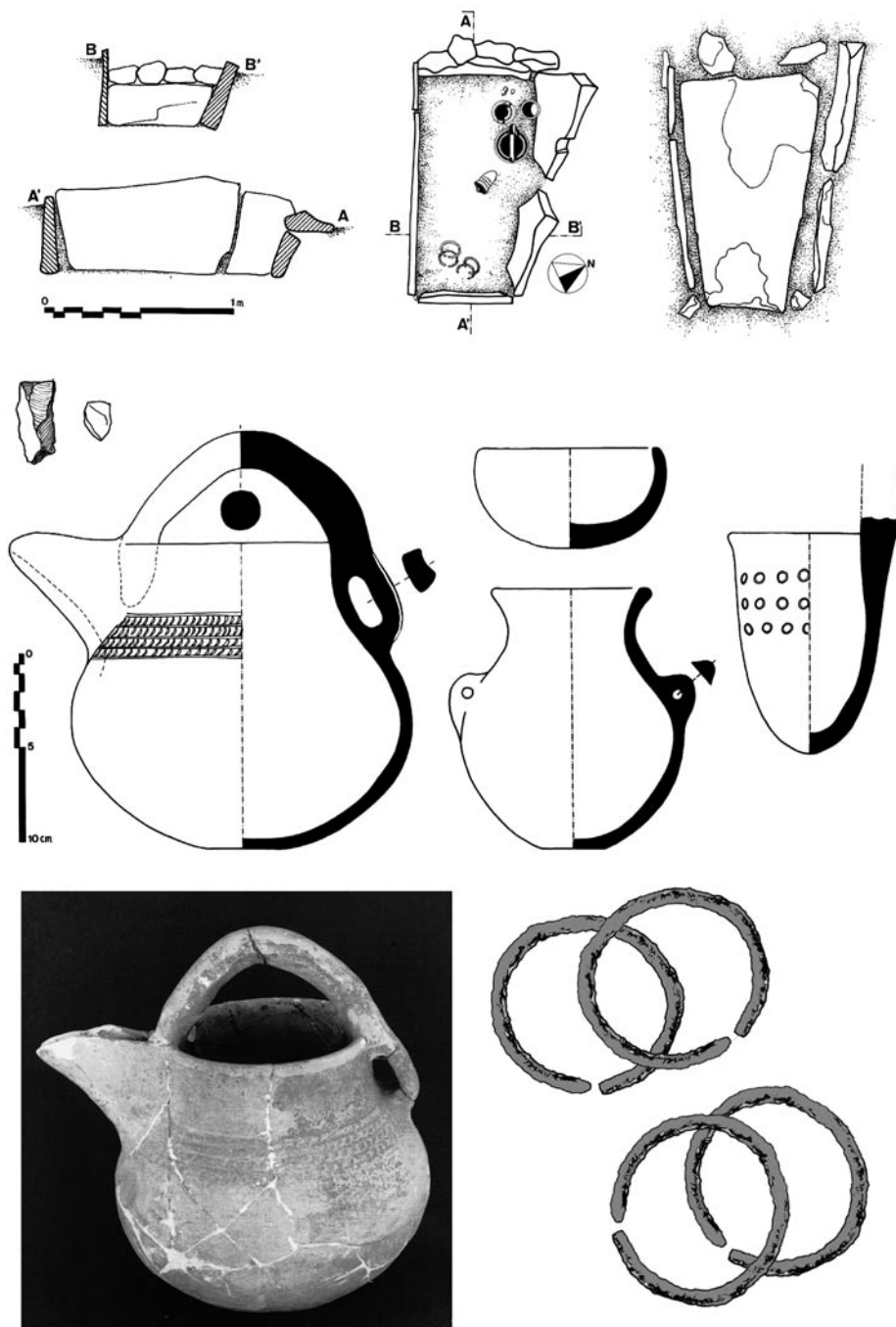


Pl. 7. Iron Age IIB. Tepe Kalwali: tomb 9 and its burialgoods.

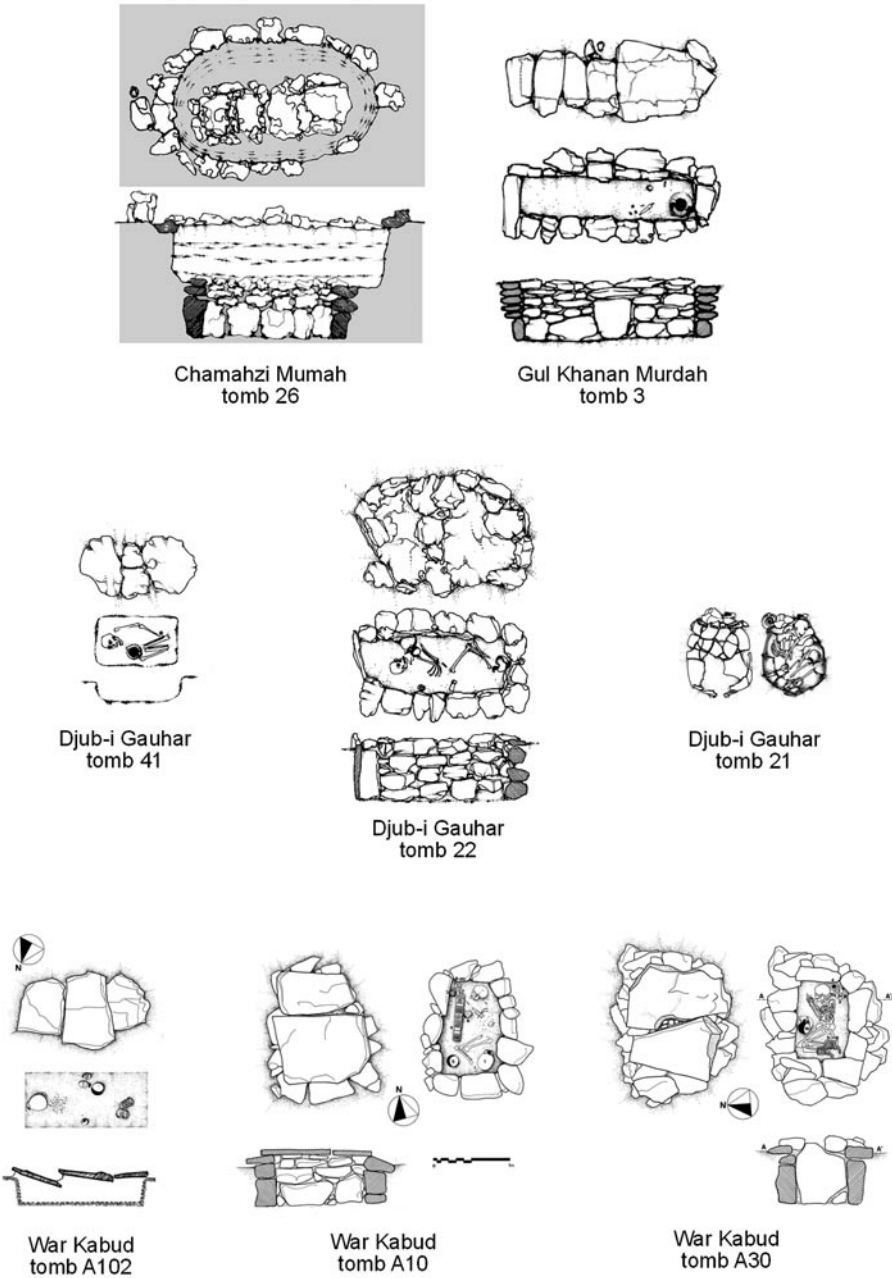




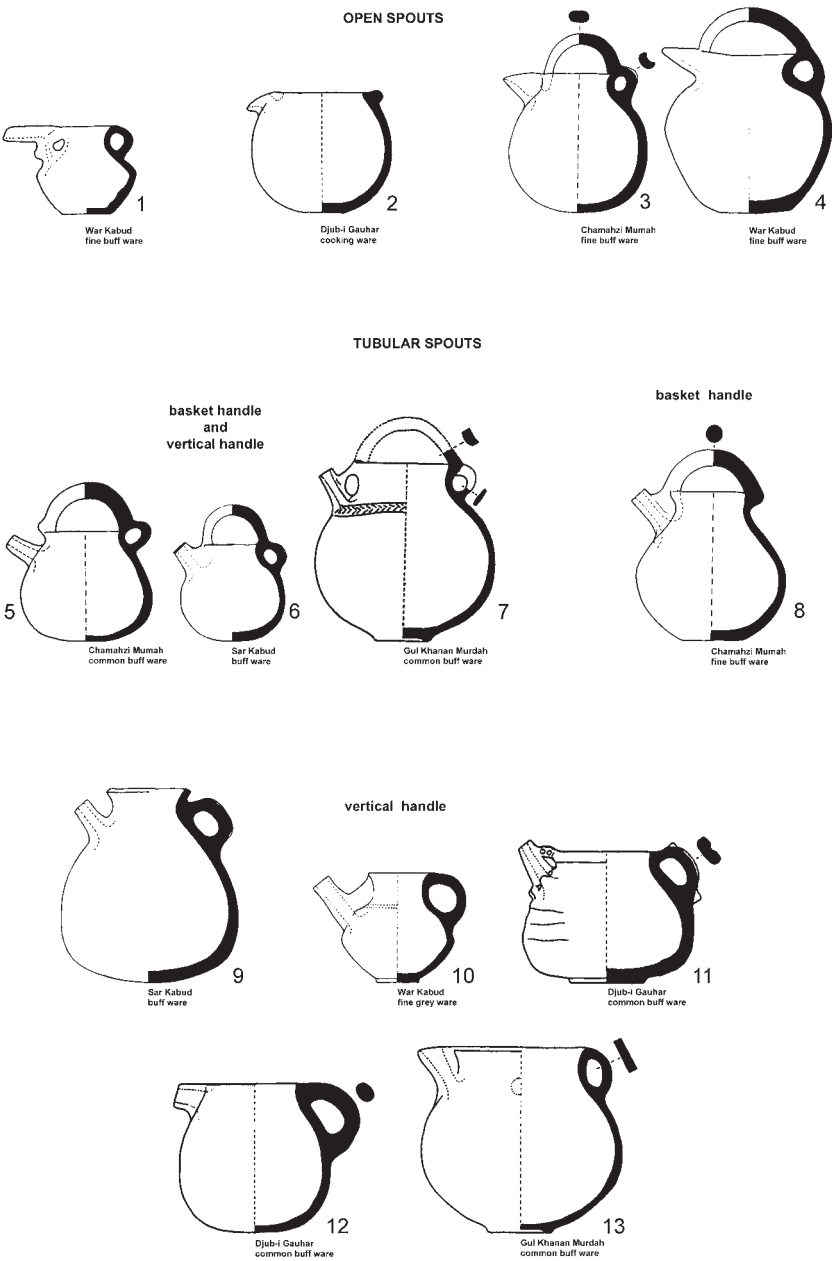
Pl. 8. Iron Age IIB. Selection of characteristic pottery from Tepe Kalwali.



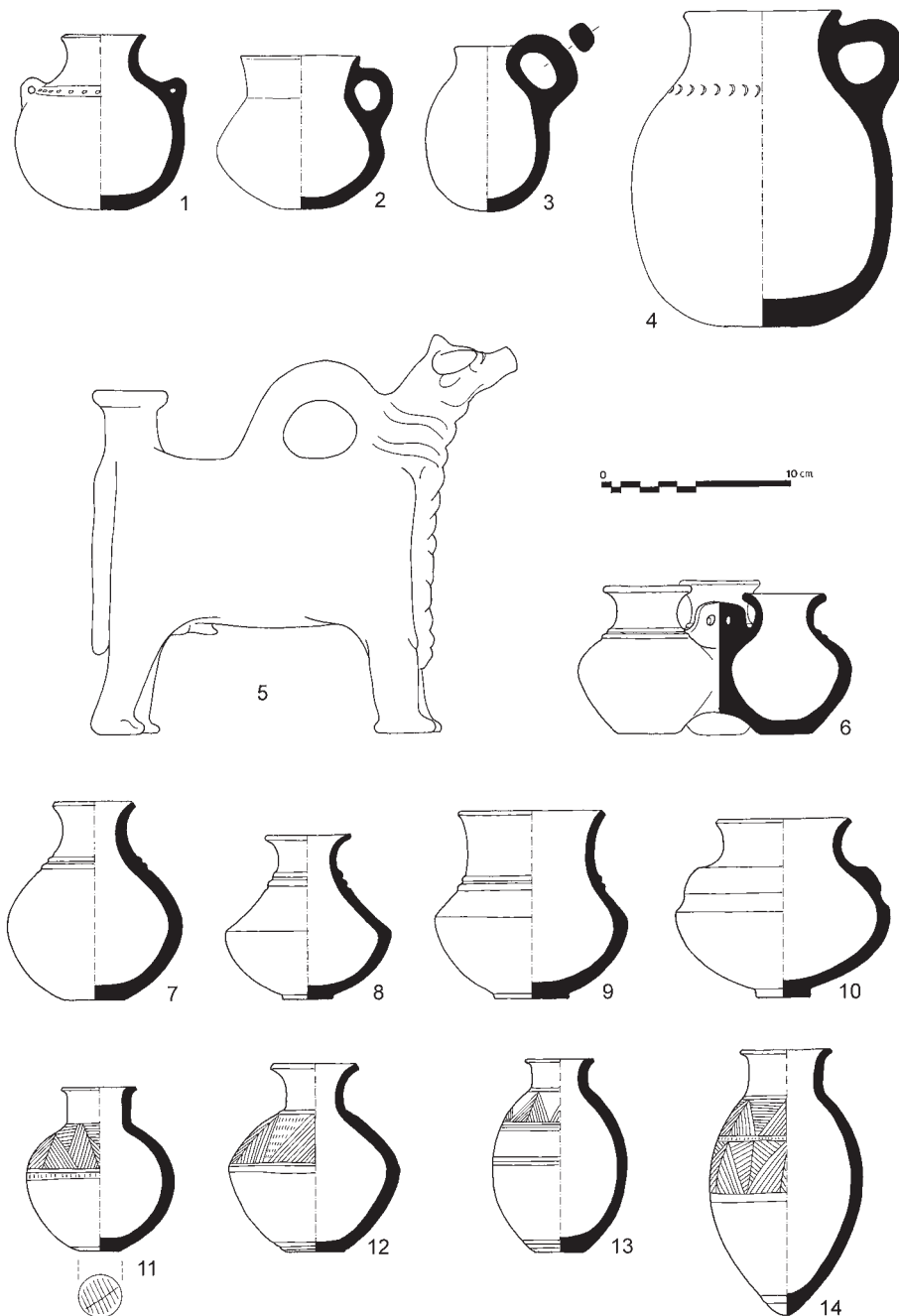
Pl. 9. Iron Age IIB. A female tomb at Pusht-i Kabud with pottery, lithic tools and iron anklets.



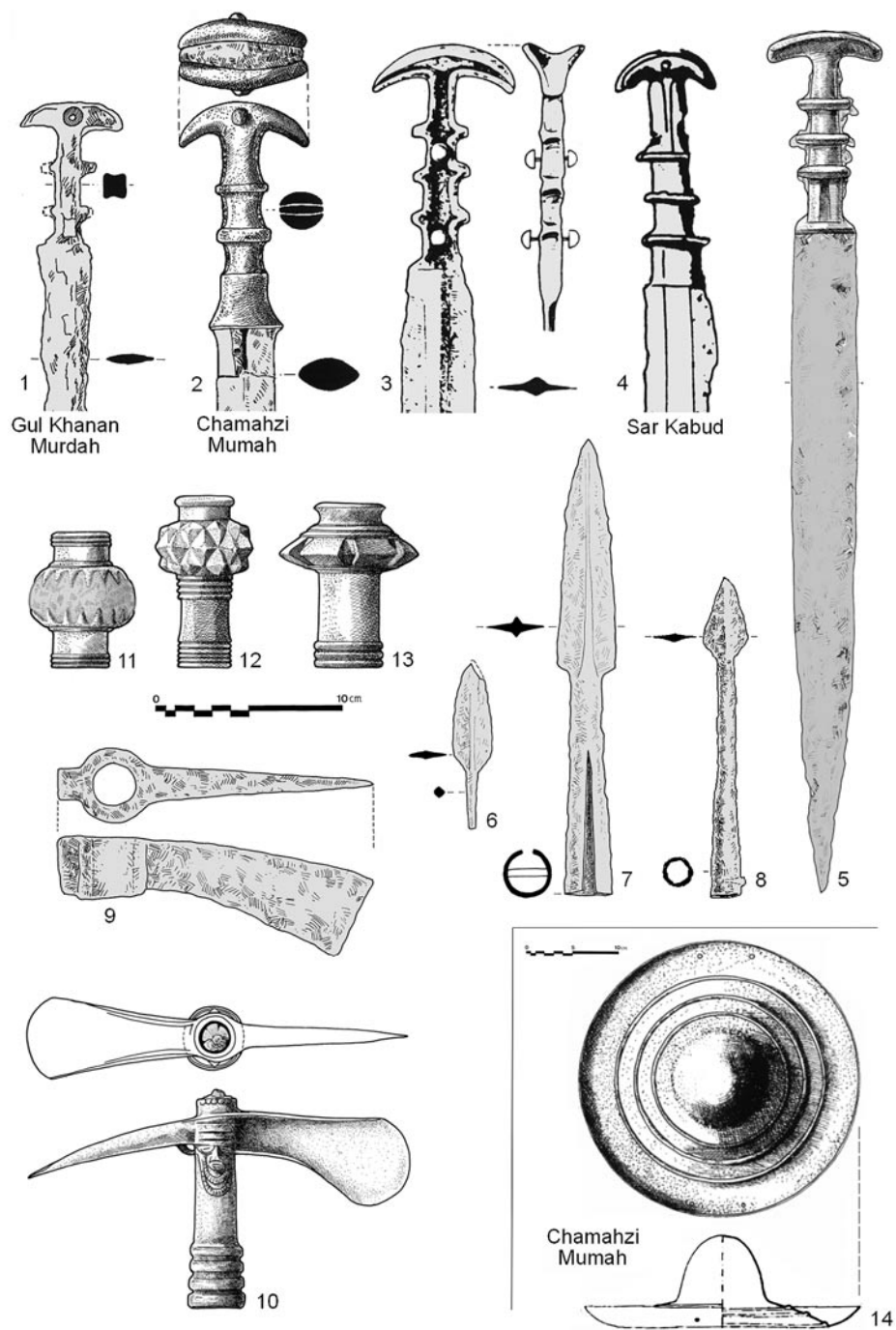
Pl. 10. Iron Age III. A survey of the tomb constructions from Chamahzi Mumah, Gul Khanan Murdah, Djub-i Gauhar and War Kabud.



Pl. 11. Iron Age III. A survey of the Iron Age III teapot shapes.

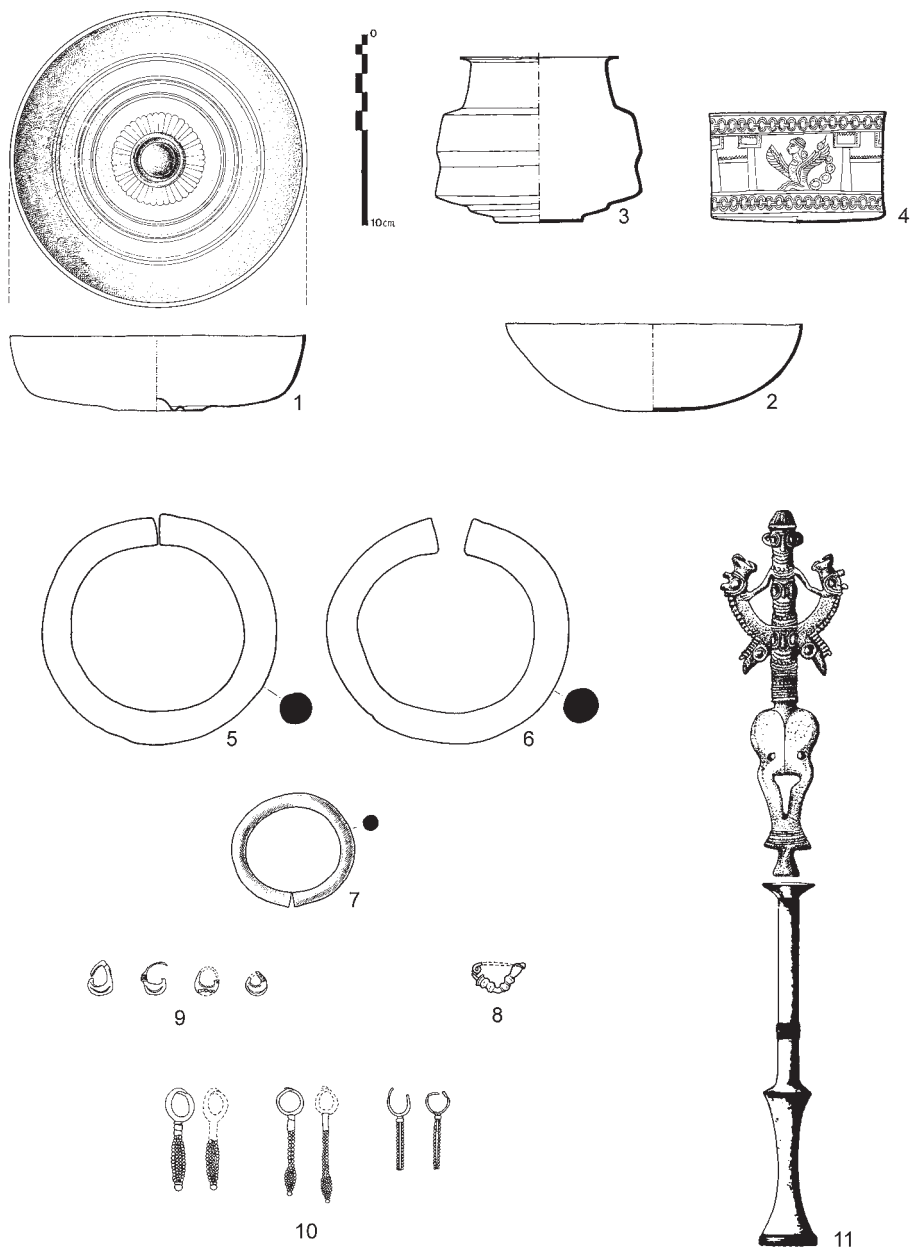


Pl. 12. Iron Age III. A survey of characteristic pottery shapes from War Kabud.



Pl. 13. Iron Age III. A survey of the armament: swords (1-5), arrowheads (6), spearheads (7-8), axe (9), axe-adze (10), maceheads (11-13) and shield (14). Except when otherwise indicated, all are from War Kabud.





Pl. 14. Iron Age III. Bronze vessels (1-4), anklets (5-6), bracelet (7) and fibula (8), gold and silver nose rings (9) and silver earrings (10) from War Kabud.  
 "Master of animals" finial from Tattulban (11).